

Book Review:

Dies Irae, Dies Illa. Jum ta' Ghadab, dak il-Jum

Aaron Attard-Hili

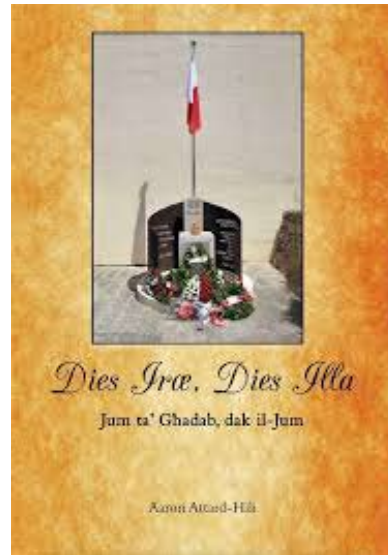
Cacciensia 6: Xagħra Local Council (2019); 86 pages

REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

The 7th of June 1919 is an important date in the history of our islands; it reminds us of the hard life our forefathers led during some particular periods of their colonial experience. The 164-year long era of British colonialism in Malta was not an easy one; there were particular moments when our forebears understood that, sadly enough, the adage 'might is right' is one to be fearful of.

Many publications in both Maltese and English, focusing on the events of the *Sette Giugno*, have appeared over the last century. Last year, our islands commemorated the centenary of this fateful event. Inspired by this milestone in our history, Xagħra historian and researcher Dr Aaron Attard-Hili published a book about the subject. As he himself states in the introduction to the publication, it was the death of Ġużeppi Bajada, the victim from Xagħra who died on that day, that inspired him to delve deeper into the subject and come out with this valuable publication which as far as I know is the only one from Gozo that covers the *Sette Giugno* events. Dr Attard-Hili's publication is of the utmost importance because it presents the general reader with the history of such an important incident in Maltese history from a purely Gozitan perspective; the author manages to do this without underestimating the other important details of the proceedings.

The title of the publication is quite suggestive; the author quotes an ancient liturgical Latin poem which features in the Mass of the Dead and which has been attributed to different authors varying from Thomas of Celano to Saint Bernard or Saint Bonaventure. The quoted phrase meaning 'Day of wrath and doom impending' with a Maltese translation provided in the subtitle of the book could not be more ideal. It expresses the emotional atmosphere and the mood of the Maltese people on that fateful day. Our writer bases his work on a wide variety of documents; he is selective in his choice of his primary sources so much so that Dr Paul Bartolo, the author of the book's short



presentation, refers to them as 'unusual sources' thus emphasizing the originality of Attard-Hili's work. A most important fact connected with the events is the reality that the colonial administration was wrong in its judgement of the case since it picked up the wrong information about Ġużeppi Bajada and even accused him of acts he did not do in order to strengthen its case.

Dr Aaron Attard-Hili's publication about the *Sette Giugno* events should be very useful for those students of History who want to become as familiar as possible with this particular date in our past. The photographs of documents, events and personalities make the publication a very informative one. We should all be grateful for Dr Attard-Hili's reading of History as presented in this latest book of his and I am sure that it will be enjoyed by one and all. I recommend it not only to those who cherish the history of our islands but to all those who enjoy reading in the Maltese language. Last but not least this publication leaves no stone unturned to show the various evils of the colonial system, a system which is certainly at odds with the democratic system that has now almost become the order of the day. Copies of the book can be obtained from the Xagħra Local Council (Gozo) via xagħra.lc@gov.mt.